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CULTURAL IDENTITY IN APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES*

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Summary: There is hardly any ancient work as complex and multi-layered as Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*. Whether we regard it as a mere sophisticated literary entertainment, or a religious lesson disguised as *fabula Graecanica*, it certainly offers many angles of research. The aim of the paper is to examine one of its most significant aspects, namely its multicultural character. Although modelled on a Greek narrative and taking place in completely Greek environments following the Greek literary tradition, it undeniably possesses an air of Romanness. The author lets his characters fluctuate somewhere between Roman and Greek, urban and provincial, local and imperial, barbarian and sophisticated. In many places, Lucius, Apuleius' alter ego, refers to the relationships between different cultures, especially Greek and Roman, not to forget African with respect to Apuleius' origins. But we have to look even further and see the novel as a fictitious world of its own, playing on readers' expectations, prejudices, as well as historical and cultural background. To understand the novel, one must try to uncover these subtle nuances reflecting the tastes of its readership. The paper tries to answer the question how Apuleius treats his target audience which was, no doubt, composed of a very multifarious mass of people, without losing sight of the famous *Quis ille?* – a paradigm of Apuleius' approach in this novel, in which the questions asked never seem to expect any answers, and even if so, not just one is tenable.

Key words: cultural identity, Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, multiculturalism, Romanness

The various aspects and representations of identity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* have been subject of many scholarly contributions lately. To encompass all of these is not possible in a single paper, perhaps not even in a single book.¹ Therefore, my point is to outline the main issues concerning whether and how the relationships between Rome, as a political centre of 2nd century society, and the Greek world, still the traditional centre of culture at the time, are displayed in the novel. The interpretation of these certainly has many pitfalls and one must be very careful when putting any state-

¹ Most recently, Graverini attempted to encompass the matter, see GRAVERINI, L.: *Literature and Identity in the Golden Ass of Apuleius*. Transl. B. T. LEE. The Ohio State University Press 2012.

ments whatsoever. What I hope for is to bring the matter into discussion, not only to assess my own view but also to perhaps gain new insights into the topic.

It is well-known that Apuleius probably came from the town of Madauros (today's M'Daourouch in Algeria)² in the Roman province of Numidia. In *Apologia* he refers to himself as *Seminumidam et Semigaetulum*,³ but one must keep in mind that both terms could refer either to his ethnic origin or a merely geographical location of his hometown (between Numidia and Gaetulia). After studying rhetoric and grammar in Carthage,⁴ he spent a substantial amount of his patrimony on more advanced studies in Athens,⁵ where he was dealing predominantly with Platonic philosophy.⁶ He then travelled through Asia Minor, Egypt and Italy, and probably also practised for some time as an advocate in Rome.⁷ After that, he returned to Africa, where he held the office of *sacerdos provinciae Africae*,⁸ and occasionally gave speeches in public. Thus, it may be said that we know his identity quite well. However, if we consider identity not from the ethnic point of view, but the cultural one, we are suddenly at odds about Apuleius. Was he an African proud of his origin and promoting the glory of African provinces, a thoroughly Romanized provincial citizen who owed much of his success to his Romanness, or a Greek (in terms of culture) endorsing the Hellenistic ideal in his works? Recently, much scholarly attention has been paid to his relationship not only to the official power of the Roman Empire and its literary models, but also to Greek literary tradition, even to the possible influences of his provincial homeland. Here the question arises whether he promoted his African, resp. provincial, culture in his works. Various scholars have various answers to this. Some assume that he was essentially Roman/Latinized in terms of culture, i.e. that he wrote for Romans in the first place, and even a pioneer of *Romanitas* in African

² In Madauros, a statue base has been found with an inscription: *(phi)losopho (Pl)atonico (Ma)dau-
renses cives ornameto suo (ILAlg 2115)*. If we identify the Platonic philosopher mentioned with Apuleius, it can be suggested that Apuleius was active in Madauros, although it does not prove that he was born here. However, there are four extant inscriptions mentioning *gens Apuleia* at Madauros (*ILAlg* 2276–2277, 2278, 2279, 2236) and the later tradition was quite sure about Apuleius's birthplace, see especially Augustine's testimony in *August. Ep.* 102. 32 and *De civ. D.* 8. 14. 2, but also *Sid. Apoll. Epist.* 9. 13. 3 and *Cassiod. Inst.* 2. 4. 6. See also "*Madaurensem*" in *Apul. Met.* 11. 27, which cannot be regarded as a proof, but has to be taken into account, too. Nevertheless, we cannot know whether Apuleius's family was indigenous or came to Africa as colonial settlers.

³ *Apul. Apol.* 24. 1.

⁴ *Apul. Flor.* 18. 15, 20. 3.

⁵ *Apul. Apol.* 23. 1: *relictum a patre HS XX paulo secus, idque a me longa peregrinatione et diutinis studiis et crebris liberalitatibus modice imminutum*. Apuleius's father held the honourable office of *duumvir of the colonia* (see *Apul. Apol.* 24. 9). The Antonine period was the time of a substantial rise of African aristocracy in imperial elites, which in return actively supported the process of the Romanization of Africa, see KEULEN, W. H.: *Fronto and Apuleius: Two African Careers in the Roman Empire*. In LEE, B. J. – FINKELPEARL, E. – GRAVERINI, L. (eds.): *Apuleius and Africa*. New York – London 2014, 129 ff.

⁶ Though Carthage is mentioned as the first place where he was introduced to Platonic philosophy (*Apul. Flor.* 18. 15), only in Athens did Apuleius fully immerse into the subject (*Apul. Flor.* 15. 26, 20. 4).

⁷ See *Flor.* 17. 4; Lucius' career as an advocate in Rome in *Met.* 11. 28 may be an autobiographical account.

⁸ See *Apul. Apol.* 16. 38; *August. Ep.* 138. 19. The office was established by Vespasian, C. Caecilius Galla was the first to be elected to this office.

provinces.⁹ Others see him as a promoter of Greek culture in the Latin-speaking regions and emphasize the Greek influences in his works, even calling him *Socrates Africanus*.¹⁰ There are also scholars who emphasize his provincial African origins, suggesting that he could be the voice of those subjected to Roman power.¹¹

Yet, when approaching the problem, one must first think of what constituted an identity in antiquity and how the inhabitants of the Roman Empire constructed their identity. As Stone justly suggests,¹² the importance of the aspect of nation/ethnicity of a particular author to his identity is often exaggerated due to our own modern presumptions and conventions; however, especially in the time of Apuleius, identity was rather constructed on the basis of social standing, wealth, literacy, education, sex, etc. This argument is being constantly confirmed by Apuleius himself – he does not identify his characters by stating their geographical origins, but rather refers to their *ratio vivendi*.¹³ This is not to infer that the provincial origin of someone was never mocked by Romans, but such a mockery was always connected with one's culture/education, as, for instance, in the case of Septimius Severus' embarrassment about his sister's inability to speak Latin.¹⁴ Apuleius' references to Greek and Latin literature and culture have been documented and analysed in much detail by many scholars, offering, no doubt, many useful insights into his personality and the society he lived in, but still they do not prove that he had no African identity. *Vice versa*, the fact that he celebrates Carthage does not necessarily mean that he supported any opposition to Rome and its imperial power. Despite all the information we have, we are unable to tell how Apuleius himself viewed his own identity, i.e. whether he felt more like a Roman, an African, a Greek or anything else. Nevertheless, it seems that he would think in slightly different categories, maybe even not understanding the point of such a question, and if we still insisted on an answer, he would perhaps call himself a cosmopolite more than anything else. Let me illustrate this on some examples from his novel *Metamor-*

⁹ HARRISON, S.: *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*. Oxford 2000, 3; DOWDEN, K.: The Roman Audience of the *Golden Ass*. In TATUM, J. (ed.): *The Search for the Ancient Novel*. Baltimore 1994, 419 ff.; BRADLEY, K.: Apuleius and Carthage. *Ancient Narrative* 4 (2005) 3 ff.

¹⁰ SANDY, G.: *The Greek World of Apuleius*. Leiden 1997; TATUM, J.: *Apuleius and the Golden Ass*. Cornell University Press 1979, 105 ff.

¹¹ GRAVERINI, L.: Corinth, Rome, and Africa: A Cultural Background for the Tale of the Ass. In PASCHALIS, M. – FRANGOULIDIS, S. (eds.): *Space in the Ancient Novel* [Ancient Narrative Suppl. 1]. Groningen 2002, 69.

¹² The term itself is problematic, therefore, Stone suggests to replace it with "identification", which is defined as the "active process of defining who we are, defining who others are, then defining who we are, us defining who they think we are, and so on". See STONE, L. D.: Identity and Identification in Apuleius' *Apology*, *Florida*, and *Metamorphoses*. In *Apuleius and Africa* (n. 5) 154 ff.

¹³ See Apul. *Apol.* 24. 3: *non enim ubi prognatus, sed ut moratus spectandum sit*.

¹⁴ *Hist. Aug.* Sept. Sev. 15. 7. Septimius Severus was born in Leptis Magna in the Roman province of Africa Proconsularis, so he did not have any reason to be embarrassed about his sister's origin. His own career was the proof of the insignificance of geographical origin in late antiquity. Lack of fluency in Latin, however, could be a huge impediment when someone was aspiring higher. The same approach is obvious from Apuleius' strategy in denigrating his opponents in *Apologia*, where he treats Claudius Maximus as an equal on the basis of their level of education and social standing (see Apul. *Apol.* 25. 9, 36. 5, 38. 1, 41. 4, 64. 3–5, etc.), while his opponents are constantly accused of ignorance and lack of culture (see Apul. *Apol.* 10. 6, 16. 10–11, 23. 1, 35. 7, etc.).

phoses, which is a display *par excellence* of the multiculturalism and interconnectedness of the intellectual milieu that Apuleius was part of.

The novel very much echoes the ever-present ambiguousness of the 2nd-century cultural world. Though modelled on a Greek original¹⁵ and taking place in a purely Greek environment,¹⁶ it is imbued with Roman *Realien* transforming the original Greek story into the thoroughly Latinized prose fiction. This cultural shift is clearly foreshadowed in the programmatic prologue by several key expressions. Here, Apuleius refers to the very process of translation, transformation, and adaptation, while stating a kind of autobiography of the book itself. The childhood of the prologue speaker is set in the lands of Attic Hymettos, the Corinthian Isthmos, and Spartan Taenaros, cities which had achieved fame through literature and culture. Then, there is a reference to the laborious study of Latin language in the city of Rome, with special emphasis on the fact that it was without a teacher or a predecessor:

Hymettos Attica et Isth[os]mos Ephyrea et Taenaros Spartiaca, glebae felices aeternum libris felicioribus conditae, mea vetus prosapia est; ibi linguam A[ttic]i[dem] primis pueritiae stipendiis merui. Mox in urbe Latia advena studiorum Quiritium indigenam sermonem aerumnabili labore nullo magistro praeunte aggressus excolui. (Apul. Met. 1. 1.)

I believe that these “autobiographical data” do not refer to Apuleius himself, nor to Lucius, or to some omniscient prologue speaker, but to the novel itself, which has already been proposed by Harrison in a very inspiring paper.¹⁷ In this way, Apuleius

¹⁵ Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* is most probably an adaptation of the *Μεταμορφώσεις* of Loukios of Patras, which has not been preserved. However, we have an account of it in Photius’ collection of the summaries of Greek works called *Βιβλιοθήκη* from the 9th century, which also refers to Lucian’s shorter version of Loukios’ original. However, concerning the shorter version, we speak rather of “pseudo-Lucian” or omit the author altogether and call the work simply *Λούκιος ἡ Όνος*; for further details, see TILG, S.: *Apuleius’ Metamorphoses. A Study in Roman Fiction*. Oxford 2014, 2 ff.

¹⁶ Though most of the narrative, in fact, takes place in no specific location, but rather in an indistinct fictitious Hellenic world; Bowie interestingly compares this with the atmosphere of Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*; see BOWIE, E.: Literary milieu. In WHITMARSH, T. (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*. Cambridge 2008, 38.

¹⁷ See HARRISON, S.: Speaking Book: The Prologue to Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. *The Classical Quarterly* 40/2 (1990) 507–513. In this paper, Harrison argues that these obviously cannot refer to Apuleius, which can be proved by simply comparing the autobiographical data we know (he did not spend his childhood in Greece) or using common sense (he could not come from three places at once). Lucius as the speaker is similarly unsatisfactory with respect to other literary references and connotations (Milesian, Egyptian) present in the prologue. The only alternative which could work here is that there is a prologue-speaker similar to those in Plautine comedies, who may introduce the forthcoming story to the reader/listener. There is, however, no agreement among scholars on this issue, the speakers are seen as follows: the propositions that it is Apuleius himself – see RIEFSTAHL, H.: *Der Roman des Apuleius: Beitrag zur Romantheorie*. Frankfurt am Main 1938, 95 ff.; Lucius – see DE JONG, I. J. F.: The Prologue as a Pseudo-dialogue and the Identity of Its (Main) Speaker. In KAHANE, A. – LAIRD, A. (eds.): *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses*. Oxford 2001, 201–212; or the ass – see SMITH, W. S. JR.: The Narrative Voice in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 103 (1972) 513–534 – seem to be abandoned now. Recently, the tendency has been towards the idea of an intentional game with multiple identities – see WINKLER, J.: *Auctor & Actor: a Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ Golden Ass*. Berkeley 1985, 200. Lucius is also understood as a

smartly summarizes what he is doing here: he transforms the Greek literary sources into the new Latin array, while he does not forbear himself from dropping a hint on the arduousness of the task. Moreover, as other ancient writers and poets,¹⁸ he does not forget to emphasize his own merits by stating that he was the first to have done so and there was no one who would have guided him. In addition, speaking books are not an unfamiliar phenomenon in ancient literature.¹⁹ There are more references that suggest that this is clearly a programmatic statement of strictly literary character, having no real ties to the narrative itself, like *Milesio isto sermone* indicating the indebtedness (whether formally or in terms of content) to the genre of *Milesian Tales*, *fabulam Graecanicam*, a Greek story (i.e. Greek in origin),²⁰ and *papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam*.²¹

The reference to *exoticus ac forensis sermo* seems to indicate a Roman readership of the novel, as Apuleius is apologising here and, at the same time, alluring his Roman readership to read a tale which could sound too foreign and exotic to Roman ears.²² This aptly illustrates the ambivalence of the Roman approach to such stories – on the one hand, it does not suit the Roman love for formal, pragmatic prose; on the other, it anticipates its own success just because of the seeming frivolity of its matter. The possible criticism Apuleius is hinting at is well expressed in a scornful account of Apuleius' novel in *Hist. Aug. Clod. Alb.* 12. 12. This refers with chagrin to the fact that emperor Clodius Albinus, though being an educated man, busied himself with *neniis quibusdam anilibus* and grew old *inter milesias punicas Apulei sui*. This is intriguing because it suggests that at least the ancient critics did not consider *Metamorphoses* a highly sophisticated work with a religious/philosophical background, as modern scholars mostly do.²³

general narrator of the prologue, as well as the character of the book – see DOWDEN, K.: Apuleius and the Art of Narration. *Classical Quarterly* 32/02 (1982) 419 ff.; as a Plautine prologue-speaker – see TATUM (n. 10) 25 ff.; or, most recently, some scholars assume that “Lucius/Loukios talks about his existence in and as a book” – see TILG (n. 15) 23.

¹⁸ See the similar introductions (*loci eminentiae*) of Augustan elegiac poets: Prop. 3. 1. 3–4; Hor. *Carm.* 3. 1. 2–4, 3. 30. 13–14; Ov. *Met.* 1. 1–2.

¹⁹ See Mart. 10. 1, Ovid's epigram introducing *Am.* 1; for modern views on the topic, see HARRISON, S.: *Framing the Ass: Literary Texture in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. Oxford 2013, 73 f.

²⁰ See Varro *LL* 10. 70.

²¹ This could be a mere geographical reference, but *argutia* could denote the sharp and witty tone of a satirist, as the Egyptians were renowned for their love of irony and mockery. For the satirical elements in *Metamorphoses*, see KEULEN, W. H.: Comic Invention and Superstitious Frenzy in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The Figure of Socrates as an Icon of Satirical Self-Exposure. *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003) 107 ff., and ZIMMERMAN, M.: Echoes of Roman Satire in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. In NAUTA, R. R. (ed.): *Desultoria Scientia. Genre in Apuleius' Metamorphoses and Related Texts*. Peeters Publishers 2006, 87 ff.

²² Prose fiction was by far not as popular with Roman writers as it was in the Greek literary milieu. See Bowie's discussion of the point in WHITMARSH (n.16) 35 ff.

²³ Though *anilis fabula* and *milesia punica* may be strictly literary terms not inferring any frivolity of the matter, there is no doubt that the overall effect of the passage is that of contempt and derision (*maior fuit dolor, quod illum pro litterato laudandum plerique duxistis, cum ille neniis quibusdam anilis occupatus...*). Furthermore, there are no major works which would be inspired by *Metamorphoses*, or even by another extant piece of Roman prose fiction, Petronius' *Satyricon*; apart from the abovementioned reference, only Augustine mentions the novel (*August. De civ. D.* 18. 18).

It has to be pointed out here that, at least from the time of Cicero, the mastering of Greek was not seen as a betrayal of Latin tradition but as the best way to shape a perfect Latin. Cicero explicitly says that he embellished his Latin by declaiming in Greek: *multum etiam Latine sed Graece saepius, vel quod Graeca oratio plura ornamenta suppeditans consuetudinem similiter Latine dicendi adferebat* (Cic. Brut. 310).²⁴ The fact that one excelled in Greek presupposed that he would speak his mother tongue, i.e. Latin, properly, too. Conversely, *mores Graecorum* were often criticised by ancient authors.²⁵ As Swain²⁶ persuasively argues, “the demonstration that he [Apuleius] commanded Greek culture was a key part of his self-presentation as a master of Latin”. By saying this, Swain proposes that Apuleius’ bilingualism is rather theatrical, intended predominantly to promote himself as a member of Roman elites. I agree with this but only to a certain degree: there is no doubt that theatricality has always played its role in Apuleius’ works; however, there was nothing more natural to Apuleius, who is perhaps the best example of a multicultural cosmopolite with provincial origin, than bilingualism, code-switching, and Greco-Roman adaptation. In my opinion, despite the fact that Apuleius certainly cared about his self-presentation, he was equally interested in achieving the best effect possible, which he did by naturally using both languages in different contexts. This, however, does not mean that Apuleius’ Greek references were mere expressions of Romanness, as it was in Cicero’s case. On the other hand, the Greek references in *Metamorphoses* or his other works do not necessarily mean that he promoted Greek culture any more than the Latin one. In the time of Apuleius, the attitude to contemporary Greeks was much more relaxed, and Romans no longer felt the need to compare to or compete with Greeks on cultural, linguistic, or any other level. Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae* provide us with multiple examples of this changed approach; for instance, in the banquet scene, when some Greeks who regarded Latin language rude and barbarous provoked Antonius Julianus, a public teacher from Spain, to defend Roman culture in a very neat manner – chanting the polished verses of old Latin poets to prove that Romans, too, have always been lovers of Venus.²⁷ The statement stated at the end of the prologue informs readers about the fact that the work is an adaptation and insinuates

²⁴ Cf. Cic. Att. 9. 4: *in his ego me consultationibus exercens et disserens in utramque partem tum Graece tum Latine et abduco parumper animum a molestiis et τῶν προὔργων τι delibero*. See also Quintilian’s opinions on the significance of translation as the best exercise to develop and enrich Latin vocabulary (Quint. Inst. 5. 2–3).

²⁵ Greek was used to educate the elites, but not in a bilingual system, rather to make Latin the new international language of culture; see also SWAIN, S.: Bilingualism in Cicero? The Evidence of Code-Switching. In ADAMS, J. N. – JANSE, M. – SWAIN, S. (eds.): *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*. Oxford 2002, 128 ff.

²⁶ See SWAIN, S.: *The Worlds of Aulus Gellius*. Oxford 2004, 13.

²⁷ Though Greeks still operated in terms of old stereotypes about Roman inferiority with regards to culture and literature, Romans represented by Antonius Julianus were already relaxed and sure about their (at least) equal status. Gell. NA 19. 9: *... Tum resupinus, capite convelato, voce admodum quam suavi, versus cecinit Valeri Aeditui, veteris poetae, item Porcii Licini et Q. Catuli, quibus mundius, venustius, limatius, tersius, Graecum Latinumve nihil quicquam reperiri puto*.

structure and genre of the following narrative: *Iam haec equidem ipsa vocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo quem accessimus respondet.*²⁸

In *Metamorphoses*, the transformation of Greek into Latin (*ipsa vocis immutatio*) is inseparably accompanied by the transformation of higher genres (epic, tragedy) to lower ones (novel, parody, comedy), which is well expressed by the analogy with *desultoria scientia*, the art of an acrobat jumping from one horse to another.²⁹ Apuleius refers to his method of jumping from one area to another not only geographically but also literarily.³⁰ In Book X, the narrator steps out of the story again to warn the reader that he should now step off the “light shoes” of comedy and put on the “high shoes” of tragedy,³¹ while a similar switch is also obvious from the first few lines referring to the Hippolytan theme, i.e. the character of a wicked stepmother trying to seduce her stepson. Generally speaking, it must be said that the re-use of elevated poetic genres is the popular method of Roman satire. This links *Metamorphoses* to a very Roman literary tradition; especially the study of the features of Menippean satire can be very illuminating for the understanding of *Metamorphoses*, although some deal of scepticism is necessary here, too.³²

If we read further, the question of identity arises even more pressingly. Although the problem can be embraced from different points of view, the best way is to try to assess all these as working simultaneously. The trial scene at the Festival of Laughter³³ well illustrates how Apuleius works with various literary and cultural identities. Although we are reading a *fabula Graecanica*³⁴ and one could assume that the story takes place in a thoroughly Greek environment, Apuleius took the trouble to Romanize the Greek story. Lucius' indictment for the murder of supposed robbers who humorously turn out to be just spell-bound goat skins is carried out in a strictly Roman manner, despite the fact that it takes place in Greek Hypata. At first glance, this is apparent from the legal language and strategies of both parties. The assembly of judges is addressed as *Quirites* both by the accuser and Lucius himself, and in the

²⁸ Apul. *Met.* 1. 1. 13–15.

²⁹ The analogy is perhaps inspired by the title of one of Varro's satires *Desultorius περὶ τοῦ γράφειν*. Bitel deals with the question of what the original title of *Metamorphoses* was and proposes the possibility of a similar bilingual title *Asinus Aureus περὶ μεταμορφώσεων*; see BITEL, A.: 'Quis ille Asinus aureus?' The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius' Title. *Ancient Narrative* 1 (2000–2001) 208–244. Apuleius wants to say that the change in language well suits the versatile composition of the novel (*vocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo... respondet*).

³⁰ See SMITH (n. 17) 519.

³¹ Apul. *Met.* 10. 212–214: *iam ergo, lector optime, scito te tragoediam, non fabulam legere et a socco ad cothurnum ascendere*.

³² For example, the parody of philosophical knowledge and the author at the same time (*philosophantem asinum* in Apul. *Met.* 10. 33). For the echoes of Roman satire in *Metamorphoses*, see ZIMMERMAN (n. 21) 87 ff.; for the general account of the features of Menippean satire, see RELIHAN, J. C.: *Ancient Menippean Satire*. Baltimore 1993, 22–26. In this context, SANDY (n. 10) 251 suggests the possible influence of mime, another specifically Roman source, on *Metamorphoses*. Cf. also KEULEN, W. H.: The Wet Rituals of the Excluded Mistress. Meroe and the Mime. In *Desultoria Scientia* (n. 21) 55 ff., who discusses Apuleius' treatment of popular scenes from adultery mimes.

³³ Apul. *Met.* 3. 3. 1 – 3. 9. 6.

³⁴ *Graecanicus* can be the term referring to a membership in community (ethnicity), as well as a ktetic form referring to the genre itself.

case of the accuser, even as *Quirites sanctissimi*.³⁵ Here, also Roman literary echoes come into play, as it has already been plausibly argued that Lucius' defence strategy is modelled on Cicero's *Pro Milone*.³⁶ Cicero's strategy to persuade the jury that although Milo committed a murder, he did it in self-defence and for the sake of the public welfare resonates in Lucius' own defence, i.e. by murdering the dangerous robbers he only behaved as a good citizen.³⁷ Apuleius must have been very well-acquainted with Cicero as an unattainable rhetoric model and intentionally took his style as his object of parody.³⁸ When Lucius, now already an ass, tries to eat the roses from Epona's shrine, his servant who takes care of the horses barks at him: *quo usque tandem... cantherum patiemur istum...*? In this moment, every Roman (perhaps not only Roman) would think of Cicero's famous speech *In Catilinam*.³⁹ On the other hand, the comic motif of wine skins could also have been inspired by Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai* (*The Women Celebrating the Thesmophoria*);⁴⁰ nevertheless, Apuleius' audience was perhaps more familiar with the atmosphere of Plautine plays. Plautus' plays also lack any specific place, they take place in a fictional "Greekish" world, and the author often steps out to draw the attention of his audience to the fact that they are actually watching a play.⁴¹ Perhaps more apparently, an attentive reader could, at the same time, be reminded of the tragic hero Ajax whom Athena afflicts with madness so that he slaughters a flock of sheep instead of the Achaean leaders, just like Lucius in his drunkenness kills wine skins instead of robbers. Last but not least, the trial scene could also be a witty allusion to Apuleius' own famous trial in Sabratha (156–158 AD), though only if we agree with the late dating of *Metamor-*

³⁵ Apul. *Met.* 3. 3. 22, 3. 5. 2. See also another Roman office, *lictores*, in Apul. *Met.* 3. 1. 20, 3. 9. 22, and 9. 41. 16; and several references to Roman *munera*, *gladiatores*, *venatores*, etc. (Apul. *Met.* 1. 7. 20, 4. 13. 21, 4. 26. 21, 10. 18. 16, 11. 8. 10, etc.).

³⁶ See LA BUA, G.: Mastering Oratory: The Mock-Trial in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. *American Journal of Philology* 134/4 (2013) 675–701.

³⁷ Apul. *Met.* 3. 5. 2: *boni civis officium arbitratus*; 3. 6. 15: *sic pace vindicata domoque hospitum ac salute communi protecta non tam impunem me, verum etiam laudabilem publice credebam fore...*; Cic. *Mil.* 33. 89: *nisi eum di immortales in eam mentem impulissent, ut homo effeminatus fortissimum virum conaretur occidere, hodie rem publicam nullam haberetis*; 36. 99: *Te (=Milone) quidem... satis laudare non possum ...*

³⁸ See also TATUM, J.: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Author of the *Metamorphoses*. In KEULEN, W. H. – NAUTA, R. R. – PANAYOTAKIS, S. (eds.): *Lectiones Scrupulosae. Essays on the Text and Interpretation of Apuleius' Metamorphoses in Honour of Maaike Zimmerman* [Ancient Narrative Suppl. 6]. Barkhuis 2006, 4–14.

³⁹ See Apul. *Met.* 3. 27. 9 and Cic. *Cat.* 1. 1. 1. Catilina, though of noble origin, was known for his insatiable appetites. This also applies to Lucius, who speaks of his father's honourable offices and his mother's noble ancestors; however, he is also unable to restrain his desires. For the more detailed discussion of Ciceronian echoes in *Metamorphoses*, see TATUM (n. 38) 4 ff.

⁴⁰ In Aristophanes' play, Mnesilochus threatens to kill Micca's baby, who, however, turns out to be just a wine skin fitted with baby shoes. Both Aristophanes' comedy and Apuleius' novel are interested in disguises, shifting identities, and role-reversals.

⁴¹ For a further discussion of Plautine elements in *Metamorphoses*, esp. with regards to the prologue, see KIRICHENKO, A.: Writing Like a Clown: Apuleius' Metafiction and Plautus' Metatheater. *Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 10 (2007) 259–271.

phoses after *Apologia*.⁴² In this context Sandy⁴³ highlights the popularity of such epideictic rhetoric in the Second Sophistic movement,⁴⁴ while suggesting another similarity of Apuleius' and Lucius' stories, namely that both have been erected a statue after the trial. Another literary/cultural allusion is found when Psyche's father consults the oracle about his daughter in Book IV. Here, Apollo gives an oracle in Latin to please the author: *sed Apollo, quanquam Graecus et Ionicus, propter Milesiae conditorem sic Latina sorte respondit....*⁴⁵ Apollo giving Latin oracles appears quite rarely in Roman literature, the instances are found in Virgil and Ovid.⁴⁶ Here again, we are faced with an obvious discrepancy – the narrator is an old Greek woman who tells the story to Charité, a young Greek woman, in a clearly Greek setting but, at the same time, there is a metanarrative allusion to the oracle being given in Latin due to the Latin author of the book, and, consequently, due to the Latin-speaking readership of *Metamorphoses*. Such changes of narrative points of view – the “auctor” and “actor”⁴⁷ being switched (one of the many *metamorphoses* present in the work) – are something Apuleius is really fond of doing. Surprisingly, the oracle is pronounced in elegiac couplets, whereas normally it would be given in hexameters, or, as Plutarch states, without using any verses whatsoever.⁴⁸ This could be due to the influence of Augustan poetry and, according to Hijmans⁴⁹ because of the general fitness of this meter for the matters of love.

But there are not only literary allusions to Romanness in *Metamorphoses*. Even though the setting is essentially Greek, the laws and rules are always Roman. This is apparent from a deeper look at Cupid and Psyche's tale, which we would expect to be the most general and fantastic of all inserted stories. Interestingly, references to very specific Roman issues are not missing here, especially those regarding Roman laws. When Venus finds out that Psyche is going to have a baby with her son, she

⁴² *Metamorphoses* can only be dated relatively due to the absence of any internal evidence. Scholars mostly accept a late date of the novel, but there are also those who prefer an early dating. Arguments of both are often based on very subjective notions, like e.g. what style or genre befits an old/young man. Perhaps the strongest argument for a late date is the absence of any references to the novel in *Apologia*, though there are several references to, or even citations from, his other works. DOWDEN (n. 9) 419 ff. challenged this majority view by arguing that Apuleius' emphasis on Roman culture in *Metamorphoses* points to a Roman, rather than an African, readership. But this is also not completely convincing, as the identity of the audience of *Metamorphoses* is another disputable question.

⁴³ See SANDY (n. 10) 169 f.

⁴⁴ For the discussion of Apuleius as one of the representatives of the Second Sophistic movement in Roman milieu, see ANDERSON, G.: *The Second Sophistic. A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire*. Routledge 1993; and especially HARRISON: Apuleius (n. 9).

⁴⁵ Apul. *Met.* 4. 32. 18.

⁴⁶ Verg. *Aen.* 2. 116–119; Ov. *Met.* 3. 9–12, 15. 634–637.

⁴⁷ The concept of *actor* vs. *auctor* was introduced by WINKLER (n. 17) in a fundamental study called *Auctor & Actor: a narratological reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass*.

⁴⁸ See Plu. *De Pythiae oraculis* 19 (*Mor.* 403a); for a further discussion of this motif in relation to the elements of *romanitas* in Greek setting, see HIJMAN, B. L.: Apollo's Sne(a)ky Tongue(s). In *Lectio-nes Scrupulosae* (n. 38) 15–27. However, Hijman's analysis seems to be quite far-fetched at some places; for instance, he regards *trisulca vibramina draconum* (*Met.* 6. 15. 2) to be a metanarrative reference to the trilingualism of the author, i.e. Latin, Greek, and Punic.

⁴⁹ HIJMAN (n. 48) 20.

claims it to be illegitimate, because their marriage cannot be valid, as they were married as unequals,⁵⁰ without the permission of the father, without any witnesses, and in the countryside.⁵¹ In the Augustan times, such a marriage between persons of unequal social rank was not yet regarded invalid; however, by the time of Marcus Aurelius, one had to obtain a special permission of the emperor and the social equality of a married couple was something attended to, if not even pressed on.⁵² This is resolved only after Jupiter makes Psyche immortal so that she is made equal with her future husband. Venus is here speaking clearly in terms of Roman marriage laws,⁵³ just like Jupiter does a while later, when the distressed Cupid comes to him for help. Jupiter promises that he will do everything he can, despite the fact that Cupid used to torment him with his arrows and forced him to violate *leges et ipsam Iuliam disciplinamque publicam* with his adulteries.⁵⁴ By this, he is obviously referring to the Augustan *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* issued in 17 BC. Last but not least, when Psyche prays for Iuno's aid and protection from her *domina* Venus, Iuno refuses because, according to the law, those who help fugitive slaves escape or conceal are regarded thieves: *...tunc etiam legibus, quae servos alienos perfugas invitis dominis vetant suscipi, prohibeor*.⁵⁵ Apuleius here clearly alludes to Roman legislation regarding fugitive slaves and a very up-to-date problem of contemporary Roman society. According to Roman law, if a fugitive slave was found, he had to be brought back to his owner or to the local authority within twenty days, whereas helping a fugitive slave to escape or hiding him was considered a theft.⁵⁶ Antoninus Pius (86–161 AD) even gave the right of warrant to those who were searching for fugitive slaves and issued a fine for those who refused assistance or in any way impeded the search. All these clearly indicate that Apuleius' "fictional" world in *Metamorphoses* is not as Greek as it might seem; on the contrary, it operates very much within the constraints of Roman ruling.

Another scene which could be analysed for its multi-layered treatment of identity emerges when the robbers kidnap Lucius, already transformed into an ass, and lead him through the impenetrable mountains with a heavy load on his back. Lucius finally remembers to invoke Caesar's name for help, but it is too late, the only thing he can utter is "O": *inter ipsas turbelas Graecorum genuino sermone nomen augustum Caesaris invocare temptavi*....⁵⁷ The reference to Caesar's name is also present in Greek *Onos*, but what is new in *Metamorphoses* is the ambiguous treatment of lan-

⁵⁰ Although *Lex Canuleia* permitted marriages between patricians and plebeians as early as in 445 BC, the real practice must have been different.

⁵¹ Cf. the objections against Apuleius' own marriage with Pudentilla (Apul. *Apol.* 67. 20).

⁵² Dig. 23. 2. 44pr.; Dig. 23. 2. 16pr.: *...si senatoris filia libertino nupsisset, nec nuptiae essent*...; for the special permission of the emperor, see Dig. 23. 2. 31; cf. also Dig. 23. 2. 49: *Observandum est, ut inferioris gradus homines ducant uxores eas, quas hi qui altioris dignitatis sunt ducere legibus propter dignitatem prohibentur*....

⁵³ Apul. *Met.* 6. 9. 22–27: *...impares enim nuptiae et praeterea in villa sine testibus et patre non consentiente factae legitimae non possunt videri ac per hoc spurius iste nascetur*....

⁵⁴ Apul. *Met.* 6. 22. 5–6.

⁵⁵ Apul. *Met.* 6. 4. 21–22.

⁵⁶ See Dig. 11. 4. 1pr.: *Is qui fugitivum celavit fur est*; *Ibid.* 11. 4. 1. 3; 1. 15. 4: *...fugitivos conquerere eosque dominis reddere debes*; cf. also Dig. 48. 15. 5 (*Lex Fabia de plagiariis*).

⁵⁷ Apul. *Met.* 3. 29. 2.

guage and identity. Finkelpearl⁵⁸ assumes that it is not very clear whether *Graecorum* belongs to *turbelas* or to *sermone*. If to *turbelas*, Greek crowds specifically referred to would create a fine contrast with the Latin language used to invoke Caesar's name, although *genuino sermone* could simply mean a human language. If to *sermone*, it would mean that Lucius invoked Caesar's name in his native Greek. Perhaps the ambiguous reading best befits Apuleius' intentionally, or perhaps intuitively, ambiguous attitude to identity – it is not important to know whether Lucius is Greek, Roman, or of other origin, still, he is an ass.⁵⁹ In Book VII Haemus pretends to be the chief of a robber band to save his fiancée from the hands of real robbers and tells the story of how his band was destroyed by the mere fact that Caesar did not want it to exist: *denique noluit esse Caesar Haemi latronis col(legium, et confestim interivit: tantum potest nutus etiam magni principis*.⁶⁰ Here, the imperial power is executed in a positive way; this time, the imperial power does help to achieve justice. Therefore, it cannot be said that Apuleius' allusions to Roman administration are subversive in every case. Though it has to be mentioned that despite the fact that Apuleius is writing from the point of view of a thoroughly Latinized Roman African who himself built a career within Rome's administration, he also shows understanding for provincial life and sometimes plays on the emotions of provincials, as, for example, in the scene with the arrogant Roman soldier who beats a Greek gardener, ignorant of Latin, because he did not respond to his question.⁶¹ Nevertheless, it is quite likely that Apuleius included this scene only to follow the Greek model,⁶² not because of any effort on his side to criticize Roman power in any way, as this is the only such direct reference to Roman authority in the novel. What is more, the character of a boastful soldier could also work as a literary allusion and point to another Plautine inspiration (besides the prologue) reminiscent of the arrogant behaviour of *Miles gloriosus*. This would also be confirmed by the comic effect resulting from the reversal of roles – the soldier is beaten by the gardener, his loftiness is overturned and the reader can laugh at his ungrounded self-importance very much the same as the audience of Plautus' *Miles gloriosus* would laugh at its main character. Thus, we are far from assuming

⁵⁸ See FINKELPEARL, E.: Apuleius, *Onos*, and Rome. In PASCHALIS, M. (ed.): *The Greek and the Roman Novel: Parallel Readings*. Barkhuis 2007, 263–276.

⁵⁹ Cf. HALL, E.: The Ass with Double Vision: Politicising an Ancient Greek Novel. In MARGOLIES, D. – JOANNOU, M. (eds.): *Heart of Heartless World: Essays in Cultural Resistance in Memory of Margot Heinemann*. London 1995, 57 ff., who focuses on the subversive elements in Greek *Onos*, claiming that it exposes the arrogance of the Roman power in Greek provinces, bringing forward the inability of Roman administration to protect its subjects from violations of law. This seems to be a rather audacious and over-politicised statement, as there is only one explicit mention of Roman imperial power (*Onos* 44–45) in the novel. In fact, the influence of the Roman Empire on the Greek world of *Onos*, whether positive or negative, is much more vivid in *Metamorphoses* than in *Onos*. Moreover, the same kind of ambiguous attitude can be observed when it comes to Apuleius' treatment of truth and fiction; for further details regarding this aspect of *Metamorphoses*, see TÓTH, A.: *Sacrilega and Sacerdos. Magic and Religion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. In: *Laetae segetes iterum*. Curavit Irena Radová. Masarykova Univerzita. Brno 2008, 218–224.

⁶⁰ *Apul. Met.* 7. 7. 21. Cf. also *Apul. Met.* 7. 7. 17–21.

⁶¹ *Apul. Met.* 9. 39–42.

⁶² *Onos* 44–45.

that Apuleius pursued any criticism of imperial power, in fact, he treats Roman presence as something indisputable and given, notwithstanding that the main character even profits from the Roman official system in the end.

The reality of contemporary Greco-Roman society is another source Apuleius makes use of in *Metamorphoses*, as e.g. in the already mentioned story of Haemus about his pretended former robber band. After the robbers are expelled by Caesar, they sail to *litus Actiacum*.⁶³ This has strong connotations with the famous battle at Actium taking place in 31 BC, a very important place in terms of Roman policy in the Mediterranean.⁶⁴ Similarly, the presence of Corinth as Lucius' hometown, although it is not a Roman town, pertains specifically to Roman readership. In Greek *Onos*, Lucius comes from Patrae, so the question arises here why Apuleius replaced the city of Patrae with Corinth? He must have done it on purpose and it must have had a special meaning for his audience. This is the issue recently discussed by Graverini⁶⁵ in much detail; therefore, I will just sum up here the most important points relevant to this paper. Most significantly, Corinth was more familiar to Roman readership, as it marked a turning point in the Mediterranean politics of Rome – once a prosperous Greek city destroyed by L. Mummius in 146 BC, it was rebuilt again by Caesar and then Augustus.⁶⁶ It was also a symbol of Greeks starting to exert their influence on Rome, thus of Greco-Roman relationships, in general.⁶⁷ Moreover, it was well-known as the centre of the cult of Isis, which is so important to our novel, while, at the same time, as a corrupt and immoral city. For the Greeks, such a city was an emblem of cultural superiority and its loss meant a symbolic loss of freedom sometimes even explained by mythology, as in one of Polystratus' epigrams⁶⁸ in which the destruction of Corinth is viewed as a vengeance of Aeneas' descendants upon Greeks for the destruction of Troy. For Romans, it was a symbol of the scales turning in their favour when it comes to dominating the Mediterranean and a proof of the greatness of Roman nation. Apuleius' more refined readers could also associate Corinth with the famous *Corinthian Oration* of Favorinus,⁶⁹ another Roman sophist and philosopher of provincial origin. In this speech, he complains about the Athenians throwing down his bronze statue in the city of Corinth because he was accused of adultery and fell into disgrace with Emperor Hadrian. Favorinus praises Corinth as the thoroughly Hellenized Roman city and claims that, even though he is a Roman, he deserves to be erected a statue there,

⁶³ Apul. *Met.* 7. 7. 7.

⁶⁴ See also the references to this in Augustan poets: Ov. *Her.* 15. 185; Prop. 2. 15. 44; Hor. *Ep.* 1. 18. 58.

⁶⁵ See GRAVERINI: Corinth (n. 11) 58–77. The main points are also summarized in *Apuleius and Africa* (n. 5) 165–175.

⁶⁶ For ancient references to this event, see Flor. 1. 32. 1; Cic. *Off.* 3. 46; *Leg. agr.* 2. 87; *Nat. D.* 3. 91.

⁶⁷ Statues, paintings, and other works of art started to flow to Rome from Greece and, according to ancient authorities, brought along the decline of morality. See Plin. *HN* 33. 149; Liv. 34. 4. 4. Later on, Corinth was the place where Flaminius and Nero announced the independence of Greeks.

⁶⁸ Polystr. *AG* 7. 297.

⁶⁹ The work was included among the orations of Dio Chrysostomus (D. Chr. 37), probably due to its likeness with his oration No. 31, which also deals with the topic of erecting statues.

because no one before him was ever such a Hellenist.⁷⁰ Thus, it can be assumed that Corinth was the best representative of cultural appropriation between Greece and Rome, used by Apuleius to emphasize the very same goal of his work.⁷¹

The tale of Cupid and Psyche contains even more specific topographical references⁷² – when Venus announces a reward for the finding of Psyche, the one who finds her should come to “*metas Murcias*” where he is to be given seven kisses, including one especially sweet from Venus herself as a reward. This is a direct reference to a specific place existent in Rome, the location of the temple of Venus and its surroundings, known as a place full of prostitutes and immoral love. However, this is no proof that Apuleius aimed his work exclusively at the inhabitants of Rome; it is quite possible that the place was known to a wider range of people not necessarily coming from Rome, as both Harrison and Graverini suggest,⁷³ but it can surely be taken as an evidence of the general Latin character of the work. What is even more intriguing is the reference to the so-called *forum cupidinis*,⁷⁴ the place mentioned by Varro as an alternative name for *macellum*, an indoor market building that sold mostly fruits and vegetables.⁷⁵ The allusion to such an archaic term corresponds with the general archaizing tendencies of the first centuries AD, and a phenomenon typical of the Second Sophistic movement. The fact that Apuleius used such a term presupposes that he expected educated readership to be able to understand such hints, while an uninformed reader could, as well, enjoy the novel without understanding a single cultural/literary hint.

It must be stated here that there were many cultured people in the Africa of Apuleius' times, as we see from his own depictions of his audience in Carthage in *Florida*,⁷⁶ where he speaks of crowds of spectators coming to hear his refined speeches both in Latin and Greek. This is confirmed by Augustine's remarks on the renown of Apuleius' works in Africa and it makes us think of whether Apuleius aimed his works predominantly at an African readership,⁷⁷ or it just happened that Africans liked

⁷⁰ D. Chr. 37. 25–26.

⁷¹ Relihan regards the interplay with hometowns to be a reflection of the globalizing character of contemporary society, as well as of Apuleius' own cosmopolitanism; see *Apuleius: the Golden Ass*. Transl. J. RELIHAN. Indianapolis 2007, xix.

⁷² For a deeper insight into literary topography in *Metamorphoses*, see HARRISON, S.: Literary Topography in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*. In *Space in the Ancient Novel* (n. 11) 40–57.

⁷³ HARRISON Apuleius (n. 9) 49–51; GRAVERINI, L.: The Negotiation of Provincial Identity through Literature: Apuleius and Vergil. In *Apuleius and Africa* (n. 5) 182.

⁷⁴ Apul. *Met.* 1. 24. 6: ...*forum cupidinis peto, inque eo piscatum opiparem...*; also *Ibid.* 1. 25. 3; 2. 25. 10. Cf. also Plaut. *Aul.* 373: *Venio ad macellum, rogito pisces...*

⁷⁵ Varro *LL* 5. 146: *Ubi variae res ad Corneta Forum Cuppedinis a cuppedio, id est a fastidio, quod multi Forum Cupidinis a cupiditate. Haec omnia posteaquam contracta in unum locum quae ad victum pertinebant et aedificatus locus, appellatum Macellum...*

⁷⁶ Apul. *Flor.* 18. 1–2: *Tanta multitudo ad audiendum convenistis, ut potius gratulari Carthagini debeam, quod tam multos eruditionis amicos habet...* Of course, this is probably an exaggerated account, but certainly it has something to say about the high level of education in some provinces. However, SANDY (n. 10) 16 regards Apuleius' description of Carthage to be far more bilingual than the epigraphic evidence suggests.

⁷⁷ August. *Ep.* 138. 19: *Apuleius autem... qui nobis Afris Afer est notior...* This remark, however, does not refer to the renown of Apuleius' works, but to Apuleius himself.

Apuleius' works more than Romans, if we are to believe Augustine's account. We must take into account that Latin was not the only bearer of culture in Africa – higher classes also used Punic, which has already been sufficiently proven by numismatic and epigraphic evidence.⁷⁸ However, there are no or very few direct African allusions⁷⁹ in *Metamorphoses*, which has been used as an argument for the Roman readership (i.e. against a provincial or Greek readership) of the novel and the strictly Roman cultural identity of its author. The Isis cult is the most obvious one but, in my opinion, it does not persuasively point to the African readership of Apuleius' novel. In the 2nd century AD, Isis' cult was very wide-spread throughout the Mediterranean, so it would indicate a cosmopolite audience more than anything else. The only explicit reference to the city of Carthage appears in the story of Cupid and Psyche. In the already mentioned passage of Psyche invoking Iuno to help her against Venus, she speaks about the most important places of her cult, including Carthage: ... *sive tu Sami ... sive celsae Carthaginis, qui te virginem vectura leonis caelo commeantem percolit ... seu [es] prope ripas Inachi ... Iuno Sospita ...*⁸⁰ This strongly recalls the famous Virgil's⁸¹ description of Iuno from the first book of *Aeneid*, where Carthage is stated as Iuno's favourite cultic place.⁸² Iuno then refuses Psyche's request, as already said above, because she would violate the valid laws. However, Graverini⁸³ suggests a different explanation based on the fact that Iuno states that she has always loved Venus as her own daughter.⁸⁴ He calls this a provocative and fake "literary amnesia" when compared to Virgil's account in *Aeneid*, where Iuno's hostility towards Latium, i.e. towards Venus, too, is almost proverbial.⁸⁵ The Iuno of Apuleius does not hate anymore; in fact, she completely "forgets" that there ever was any opposition between Carthage and Rome. Moreover, she is described in terms of a syncretistic cult similar

⁷⁸ See MILLAR, F.: Local Cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968) 133, who states that there is "not the slightest reason to think that in the Roman period any substantial literary works were written in Punic"; however, this is not so convincing in face of the literary references to Punic literature: see Sall. *Iug.* 17. 7; August. *Ep.* 17. 2. Cf. also the legal use of Punic attested in *Dig.* 32. 2pr.; 45. 1. 1. 6).

⁷⁹ See also KEULEN (n. 5) 131 ff. who dedicates a whole sub-chapter to the notion of an ass as a typical African animal.

⁸⁰ Apul. *Met.* 6. 4. 1–10.

⁸¹ Virgilian echoes in *Metamorphoses* would give for a whole study, the epic motifs in general (and with special attention paid to Virgil and Homer) in *Metamorphoses* have been discussed in many scholarly articles, see e.g. FINKELPEARL, E.: Psyche, Aeneas, and an Ass. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 6. 10 – 6. 21, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 120 (1990) 333–347; HARRISON, S.: From Epic to Novel. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici (Memoria, arte allusiva, intertestualità)* 39 (1997) 53–73; or GRAVERINI, L.: The Winged Ass. Intertextuality and Narration in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. In PANAYOTAKIS, S. – ZIMMERMAN, Z. – KEULEN, W. (eds.): *The Ancient Novel and beyond*. Leiden 2003, 207–218. The main points of interest associated with our novel are: Charité as compared with Dido, Psyche's descent to the Underworld, the parodying of epic hospitality and entertainment, heroic quests and peregrinations, etc.

⁸² Verg. *Aen.* 1. 8–12: *Urbs antiqua fuit... / Karthago... / quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam / posthabita coluisse Samo....*

⁸³ See GRAVERINI: Literature (n. 1) 204 f.

⁸⁴ Apul. *Met.* 6. 4. 15–17: ... *contra voluntatem Veneris ... quam filiae semper dilexi loco, praestare me pudor non sinit.*

⁸⁵ Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1. 34: ... *Iuno aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus ...*

to that of Isis, depicted on the back of a lion, which identifies her with the local Punic goddess Tanit.⁸⁶ She is depicted as a universal goddess assimilated to Greco-Roman divinity who still keeps her African roots.⁸⁷ Apuleius here wishes to conceal any mythological rivalry, while putting an emphasis rather on the syncretism and common points of various traditions. In this way, he speaks in favour of the common cultural ideal of all those who are subject to the Roman Empire; perhaps due to the fact that the contemporary audience no longer perceived such a conflict.

The most discussed African element in *Metamorphoses* is the autobiographical reference "*Madaurensem*" in Book XI.⁸⁸ The identity of the author is suddenly unmasked and equated with the main character Lucius.⁸⁹ Lately, there has been a general agreement among scholars that this is an intentional statement; however, there are different opinions on Apuleius' motivation for this.⁹⁰ I incline to interpret this as an authorial claim for immortality, which would be supported by the prophecy of Lucius' future in Book II, where the identities of the author, the main character, and the book itself are merged together to foretell the immortality of the whole work.⁹¹ It is hard to assess whether Apuleius used the reference to promote his hometown's fame in any way, but perhaps this was also the point, at least partially.

What is then the cultural identity of *Metamorphoses*, respectively of Apuleius and his audience? There is no single answer to this question. As Finkelpearl⁹² rightly concludes, "Apuleius is constantly conscious of his source... but has altered and complicated the issues of cultural identity as someone with a foot in the Greek culture of the second century, but seeing things through the filter of Romano-African". As the textual evidence suggests, the most plausible solution seems to be a multiple national identity, sometimes referred to as Romanized African,⁹³ i.e. due to his ambitions Apuleius had to embrace Roman and Greek language and culture, but this did not impede him from identifying himself with his African origin. Nevertheless, Apuleius' fictional world is rather Latin-speaking or "western", in general, but concerning the

⁸⁶ For more information on the cult of Iuno in Africa Proconsularis, see GRAVERINI: Literature (n. 1) 204 f. and especially n. 124.

⁸⁷ Apul. *Met.* 11. 5.

⁸⁸ Apul. *Met.* 11. 27. 9.

⁸⁹ At first, this was suspected to be a mistake of Apuleius or later scribes; however, in the light of recent studies this seems very improbable.

⁹⁰ FINKELPEARL (n. 57) 271 assumes that Apuleius could have in mind to upraise his provincial hometown before a Roman audience; TILG (n. 15) 116 regards it to be a reference to a larger authorial agenda; WINKLER (n. 17) 128 simply sees this as a clue to the real identity of the author.

⁹¹ Apul. *Met.* 2. 12. 5: *mihi... inquirenti multa respondit...; nunc enim gloriam satis floridam, nunc historiam magnam et incredulam fabulam et libros me futurum*. Cf. other poetic claims for immortality in the closing poems: Hor. *Carm.* 2. 20, 3. 30 (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius...*); *Epist.* 1. 20; and Ov. *Met.* 15. 879 (*Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis / nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas*). Moreover, the last word of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is *obibam*, which could be a witty pun on the last word of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – *vivam*.

⁹² See FINKELPEARL (n. 57) 265.

⁹³ See FINKELPEARL, E.: *Metamorphosis of Language in Apuleius. A Study of Allusion in the Novel*. Ann Arbor 1998, 143; and GRAVERINI: Corinth (n. 11) 188. Sometimes even this is avoided, and Apuleius is seen more generally as a representative of "Western" culture, see MÉTHY, N.: Fronton e Apulée, Romains ou Africains? *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 25 (1983) 46.

national identities, it is even more complicated and multi-layered. What is certain is that he did not write in terms of a conflict between cultures; on the contrary, he quite naturally appropriated the Greek source to the more general readership. This means that the multifarious identities and levels of understanding in Apuleius's novel could be best appreciated by a non-specific provincial readership of the 2nd-century Roman Empire.

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